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AUTHOR	Magner, Eleanor; Phillips, Linda
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ABSTRACT

The Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program serves not only the educational needs of migrant students in western New York, but also health, nutrition and other needs of the students and their families. The program's unique feature is its in-home programs. Developed at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Fredonia, there are now 11 program centers throughout New York. Basic program components include an initial home visit during which the tutor introduces program services; an early childhood program consisting of two in-home components of Even Start and parenting education; in-school tutoring from kindergarten through 12th grade; literature and adolescent outreach after-school programs; monthly luncheons for parents at which community organizations present their services; a parent advisory committee; an in-home, family literacy program; a 6-week summer program for students in pre-K through 12th grade; and an evening program for students who are not in school. In addition, tutors assist families with transportation to doctor's appointments when needed and assist those families who do not have health insurance to enroll in the NYS Child Health Plus Program. There is a 1-week on-campus immersion experience for high school students at SUNY College at Oswego, and 3-day on-campus retreats at SUNY Geneseo for young women and young men to explore career options. The migrant program also supplies necessities such as clothing, furniture, food, and school supplies when needed. (TD)

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FREDONIA MIGRANT EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAM: EMPOWERMENT FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES

MISS ELEANOR MAGNER
FREDONIA MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM
FREDONIA, NEW YORK
&
DR. LINDA PHILLIPS
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE AT FREDONIA

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Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program: Empowerment for Life's Challenges

Introduction

Have you ever enjoyed a cold glass of milk on a warm day? How about a freshly picked, juicy, red, vine-ripened tomato, or a large green pepper stuffed with your favorite fixings? The next time you do eat these foods or drink milk in the United States, thank a migrant worker.

Migrant workers in the United States work extremely hard at jobs that most Americans do not or will not do. The conditions under which they work are often deplorable and the pay is minimal. Living conditions are substandard, and it is only recently that bathroom facilities have been made available in the fields in which they work. Having endured all these disadvantages, it is most unfortunate that migrants are truly unappreciated for what they do.

By virtue of definition, migrant workers travel from one area to another in search of work. For many years, migrants from Florida traveled up the East Coast of the United States along what became known as the Eastern Stream. Leaving in the month of

April, they arrived in western New York in June and July to work at harvesting crops of tomatoes, corn, peppers, beans, berries, and other vegetables and fruits. Once the fall harvest season was over, they would return to the south to a warmer climate where other crops awaited their harvesting.

Today migrant workers who travel to western New York no longer come only from Florida, nor do they leave at the end of the summer or fall harvest. Many of them choose to stay during the winter months working at tying grapes, working in fishing or lumbering, or on dairy farms and in food processing plants. Today's migrant worker may be Native American, African America, Puerto Rican or Mexican, or may come from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Ecuador or Taiwan.

Even though these families may choose to stay in western New York during the winter months, it doesn't mean that they don't leave the area. At any given time they may pull up stakes and travel back to Mexico or to other states for two weeks, a month, or two months and then travel back to western New York. Because of this migratory pattern, the children of these families face enormous challenges and obstacles in the continuity of their education.

History of Program at Fredonia

In 1970, Dr. James Symula from the State University of New York College at Fredonia recognized that migrant workers and their children had needs that were not being addressed. Migrant students at that time had a school drop out rate of 97%. With a vision of meeting the needs of these students and a $15,500 budget, Dr. Symula developed a summer program for math, science and English on the campus of SUNY College at Fredonia. His focus was on the children always asking the question, "Is it good for the kids?"

In 1972, seeing the need for a year-long program, Dr. Symula wrote the very first Migrant Tutorial proposal. Beginning with a $40,000 grant for the academic year, he created programs in six local western New York school districts of: Forestville, Gowanda, Lakeshore, North Collins, Silver Creek and Westfield. At the same time, the program reached out to those migrant youth who were incarcerated in Niagara, Chautauqua and Erie counties.

The federally funded program rapidly grew from the single program centered at the Fredonia college to 14 tutorial centers throughout New York State in 1973. The program because a model

for migrant education known as the "grandfather of all programs of its kind in New York State," and Dr. Symula traveled to other states to assist in setting up migrant programs based on the New York State model.

One of the greatest aids to migrant students was a nation-wide computer tracking system developed under Title I. This program provided documentation of migrant students' medical records, test scores and skills evaluations so that they did not have to be retested every time they entered a new school system.

General Description of the Program Today

Today the Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program is multifaceted, and it serves not only the educational needs of the migrant student, but also health, nutrition and other assessed needs of the students and their families. What makes the Fredonia program unique is its attention to in-home visitations and in-home programs in conjunction with in-school tutoring.

Including the Fredonia unit, there are a total of eleven centers throughout New York State. Six of the programs have offices on the campuses of SUNY (State University of New York) colleges at Fredonia, Brockport, Cortland, New Paltz, Oneonta and

Potsdam; three programs are located at the New York State BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) centers located at Oswego, Herkimer, and Eastern Suffolk, and two programs are centered in the public schools of Batavia and East Bloomfield.

What began as a program which assisted students one on one in reading, math and science during the summer months, has become a year-round program which attempts to meet educational needs, assist in employment needs, counseling, health, transportation and translation needs of the migrant students and their families who live in rural and urban school districts. Migrant tutors assist students in regular school programs to attain grave-level proficiency and to succeed in performance standards that all children must master. They assist pre-school children and their parents in their homes and assist out of schoolers with necessary living skills.

The Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program, currently under the direction of Lucia Johnson, has 16 tutors who service 530 students. Children eligible for the program are between the ages of three and twenty-two whose parents are seasonal or

temporary agricultural workers and have moved from one school district to another in the past three years.

Basic Components of MEOP

The Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program basic components today consist of the following listed services.

1. The Home Visit the initial step in the program during which the tutor introduces the MEOP program and its services, and assesses the educational and social needs of the family. A minimum of three home visits are made per year.
2. The Early Childhood Program consisting of the two in-home components of Even Start and Parenting.
3. In-school tutoring from kindergarten through twelfth grade.
4. Two after school programs: the Literature Club and the Adolescent Outreach Program (AOP).
5. Parent Club—a monthly luncheon meeting for parents at which community organizations present their local services.
6. The Parent Action Council (PAC)—an advisory committee meeting at which parents share their viewpoint of the tutorial program.
7. Family Literacy—an in-home, whole-family literacy program where families read and learn together.
8. Summer Program—a six-week session for students in Pre-K through twelfth grade.
9. Out of School Youth Program—an evening program for students who are not in school.

Additional Services of MEOP

1. Health—migrant tutors assist families with transportation to doctors' appointments when needed and assist those families who do not have health insurance to enroll in the NYS Child Health Plus Program.
2. Summer Leadership—a one-week on-campus immersion experience for high school students. Fredonia pays for transportation and lodging for the week at SUNY College at Oswego.
3. Work Opportunities for Women (WOW)—a three-day on-campus retreat at SUNY Geneseo for young women to explore career options, examine life goals and develop self-esteem.
4. Getting Ahead in the Nineties (GAIN)—a three-day on-campus retreat at SUNY Geneseo for young men.
5. Clothing, School Supplies, Emergency Food—The Migrant Program supplies necessities such as clothing, furniture, food, and school supplies when needed.

Migrant Population Profile

The migrant population in Region 1 that includes the western New York counties of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Erie, can be characterized as being primarily two-parent families who fall below the poverty level. In 1999, the migrant population was primarily white, followed by Hispanic and then African-American heritage, but currently the population has changed and is split evenly between Hispanic and white, with very few African Americans. Many of the migrants suffer from language barriers

and have unreliable transportation or none at all. Participation by parents often suffers due to exhaustion from long work hours and cultural and language barriers.

Most of the children are elementary school students, followed by out-of-school youth, and males slightly out number the females. These children tend to be at risk due to health, social and nutritional problems.

The Migrant Tutor

At the heart of the program are the individuals who are migrant tutors and travel from school to school, from city to town or village, or from one county to another to work in the tutorial program. They work five days a week in the public schools and in migrant homes. At their annual New York State Migrant Conference, they attend workshops in "instructional techniques, health and nutrition issues, the rights of workers, immigration regulations and current issues facing migrant families." Their desire is to help the migrant student and their family in any way possible and try to be aware of cultural differences that might affect the learning process.

A Migrant Tutor's Prospective

Eleanor Magner is a tutor for the Fredonia Migrant Education Outreach Program in Western New York State. Her credentials include a Bachelor and Master's Degree in Education and a Master's Degree in Music. She has taught third through eighth grade in Catholic Parochial schools in Fredonia, Allegany, Olean, Buffalo, Ossining and New York City, and in Pleasantville and Wood Ridge in New Jersey.

Having worked for the Migrant Education program since 1987 tutoring students in Kindergarten through twelfth grade, her philosophy is to give students a "leg up" through education. "You've heard the phrase 'educate the whole child,' this program tries to educate the whole family. Like a beautiful diamond or any precious gem, its beauty is enhanced by the facets a jeweler makes. Each part of our program is a facet on the 'jewels of the fields' who are our migrant families."

Miss Magner's involvement in the various facets of the program currently take place in Dunkirk, New York, tutoring pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The in-school tutoring takes place in School 4 of the Dunkirk school system during the public schools' academic calendar year. The ethnic groups tutored in this

school are Mexican, Puerto Rican, African American and whites. Previously, she tutored kindergarten through twelfth grade students in Gowanda, New York and Westfield, New York. Since Gowanda is located on the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation, most of her students there were Native Americans from the Seneca Nation of Indians. Students in Westfield were of mixed ethnic groups including Mexican, Taiwanese, African American and white.

In Dunkirk, Miss Magner is involved in providing the following services:

1. Parenting. Families with pre-kindergarten children are serviced in the home at the convenience of the family. These children may be in Head Start, day care, or other programs for pre-schoolers.
2. Each week the tutor works with the children to prepare them for kindergarten. Lessons consist of reading and hand and eye coordination activities. Information which deals with health, school and behavior-related issues is provided to the parents through articles from various sources such as *Parenting Magazine*.
3. In-School Tutoring which comprises the majority of a tutor's work load, occurs before school, during school, and after school. Tutoring in the classroom centers on material being taught at the time by the classroom teacher. Tutoring before or after school focuses directly on the individual needs of the child as indicated by the classroom teacher's assessment.
4. After School Literature Club focuses on reading which may be holiday-related or specific topic-related, discussing this reading, making a craft and having a snack.

5. The Parent Club meets monthly for lunch where they hear nutrition experts and guest speakers from banking, women' organizations, or health agencies. Topics have included breast examination, prostate examination, herbal gardening, mortgage and loan applications, safe houses, drug and substance abuse, and nutrition education.
6. Family Literacy is an in-home service in which the tutor meets with the whole family. Activities are the same as the after school literature club. The family and tutor read a book, discuss the book, put together a craft related to the story such as cards for the holidays, gifts for Christmas, or make cookies.
7. Summer Program is for any student at any level who wishes to participate. It consists of a specified number of sessions each week over a six-week period. The number of sessions depends on the locality of the families. Since many of the families live in Dunkirk, the sessions take place in the public schools in the afternoon when the school district's summer program has been dismissed for the day. The students in the outlying school districts are scheduled when possible twice a week in the home at the convenience of the family.

The students are divided into four groups according to the grade they just completed. The groups are: pre-kindergarten three and four-year olds; kindergarten and first grade; second and third grades; and fourth and fifth grades. Activities are devised to strengthen acquired skills and to introduce new skills. Sixth through twelfth graders, which Miss Magner does not instruct, meet one evening per week as a group. The Civil War was the focus for the summer activities of this age group.

The last meeting of the summer program is a field trip. This year the four and five year olds went to Point Gratiot Park where they created their own circus. The kindergarten through fifth graders went to the Climb and Slide Amusement House; and the sixth through twelfth graders went to a Civil War re-enactment in Westfield, New York, and to Fantasy Island amusement park.

Additional Programs

There are three other programs available in Dunkirk to students who are outside the specific age groups which Miss Magner tutors. They are the Migrant Even Start Program, the Adolescent Outreach Program and the Out-of-school Youth Program.

1. The Migrant Even Start Program is a whole-family learning concept which focuses on parental educational needs such as the GED (General Equivalency Diploma), and on the child's development from birth through their eighth birthday. Parents eligible for the program do not have a high school diploma, need assistance with ESL (English as a Second Language), or have a reading level below grade seven. The tutor assists the parent in studying for the GED or improving their ESL abilities.

   The Even Start coordinator makes plans similar to those for the Parenting Program. The parent is academically involved in the program as well as working with their young children. They help them learn to identify colors, develop the skills of lacing,

tracing, and cutting, and provide activities which prepare them for reading and counting.

2. The Adolescent Outreach program (AOP) meets one night every other week to assist students with homework and discuss educational goals and careers. Individuals from various occupations are invited to share their expertise with the students. Refreshments are provided.
3. The Out-of-School Youth Program is usually an evening program for students who are not in school. This group consists of individuals who have either dropped out of the public school system or have never been educated in the United States. The program focuses on GED tutoring, ESL instruction, job interviewing and readiness, and basic living skills.

Conclusion

The Fredonia Migrant Outreach Tutorial Program is a very successful lifeline for the migrant population in western New York. The program as described in this paper is only a fraction of what the tutors do to assist these families with their day to day existence. They help many of these migrants by empowering them to overcome the obstacles inherent in their way of life.

The tutors consider it a privilege to work with these families. It is rewarding to witness children progress from grade to grade, graduate from high school, possibly attend college, and to see parents becoming more involved in their own as well as their children's welfare. It is true that not everyone may be helped, but if

only one child or one family's life improves, then we have accomplished the purpose of this program.

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Printed Name: Lemuel Berry, Jr.

Address: PO Box 325
Biddeford, ME 04005-0325

Date: 5/20/03

Position: Executive Director

Organization: NAAAS, NAHLS, NANAS, IAAS

Telephone No: 207-~~282-1925~~ 839-8004

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